



## GUEST COMMENTARY

When I was a child, I would look at my parents who were in their 40's and think that it would take forever to get that "old." Now that I'm pushing half a century (OK fifty sounds better), I don't feel much different than I did when I was 30. Sure, I can't stay up as late as I used to, or run as many miles, or eat the same foods and not gain weight, but all in all, I still feel pretty young. I think others in my age range feel the same way.

So is it true that 50 is the new 40? Is each generation getting younger or does our perception change as we get older so that we don't feel so bad about it?

I believe that we have a lot more information than our parents had about food choices and the importance of exercise. And there are many more ways to get the information. There is more access to health care and a greater focus on prevention. So those of us who have paid attention and have at least tried to make better choices are probably better off because of it.

On the other hand, my parents taught me many things to keep me young at heart. They left their jobs at work, made family and friends their priority, danced a lot, planned special family vacations and pretty much "didn't sweat the small stuff." I try to emulate those qualities in my life too.

So I guess the secret for me to staying young and young at heart is to combine the latest news on health and well being with my old fashioned upbringing. Now my next task is to make 60 the new 40.

— Linda Haugan

Human Services Group  
Assistant County Administrator

# Well, well, well...



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## OBESITY EPIDEMIC **WEIGHT-UP!**

These days there are more compelling forces to overeat and be sedentary than in the past. Cheap, energy-dense foods are mass produced, heavily advertised and readily available. Healthier foods like fruit and vegetables are generally hard to find at work, school, or when in a hurry. Long workdays make it difficult to find time for physical activity and family meals. Faulty design of many communities discourage walking, bicycling, and recreation. Children are bombarded with advertisements for junk food. Schools, succumbing to outside pressure, have reduced the time and space available for active play and physical education. The dedicated seeker of good health must prevail against mounting odds.

Of the nation's ten leading health indicators for *Healthy People 2010*, *National Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Objectives*, only the categories overweight and obesity are moving strongly in the wrong direction. The US Surgeon General has called for national action to reverse the epidemic. **Obesity now threatens to overcome tobacco as the leading cause of preventable death.** Today's children may actually have a shorter life expectancy than their parents due to increasing rates of obesity, unhealthy eating habits, and physical inactivity.

Obesity in California has been described as a true public health crisis. According to information released at the recent Governor's Summit on Health, Nutrition, and Obesity, over one-half of California adults are overweight or obese, and approximately 1 in 3 children in California are overweight or at risk of being overweight. A recent study conducted by the California Center for Public Health Advocacy found the rate of California children who are overweight has increased by 6 percent over the last 3 years.

The California Department of Health Services recently announced that physical inactivity, overweight, and obesity in adults cost Californians nearly \$22 billion a year, and is expected to rise to \$28 billion this year. These costs include medical care, worker's compensation and lost productivity.

In San Bernardino County, obesity rates for adults and adolescents top state rates. In 2003, overweight or obese rates for adults in San Bernardino County were 65%, compared to the state rate of 52%. The rate for adolescents 12-17 years old was 33%, compared to the state rate of 22%.

Along with obesity in adults come associated health risks, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, certain types of cancer, arthritis-related disabilities, and depression. It is feared that overweight and obesity may erase the last century's victories over heart disease and stroke and that the rates of breast, prostate, and colon cancer also will increase.

Children and adolescents who are overweight are at increased risk for type 2 diabetes mellitus, asthma, orthopedic problems, behavioral problems and depression. They are more likely to have risk factors for cardiovascular disease, such as increased blood pressure and cholesterol. In addition, children and adolescents who are overweight are more likely to remain so as adults.

Strategies for reversing the obesity crises must be comprehensive and involve government, public, nonprofit, and business sectors. It is short sighted to point solely to the responsibility of individuals as a key factor for overcoming this multi dimensional problem. Formal and informal policies determined by government and business strongly affect the eating and activity of individuals and families.

(Continued on reverse)

## WEIGHT-UP! (Continued)

It is very difficult for working Californians to meet recommended goals without addressing healthy eating and physical activity at work. For example, in order to meet the United States Department of Agriculture's *MyPyramid* daily recommended 4½ cups of fruits and vegetables, a full-time employee would have to eat 1 to 2 fruits and vegetables every waking hour after work. Most employees with desk jobs would have to spend most of their evening in motion in order to manage the recommended 10,000 steps a day.

Employers and employees can work together to create effective, cost neutral changes that improve access to nutritious foods and increase opportunities for physical activity. A dedicated employee can act as a role model to others by making simple changes, such as filling a candy bowl with fresh grapes, cherry tomatoes, or nuts. Physical activity can be promoted by walking or climbing the stairwells during lunch or breaks. Walking or biking to work can be encouraged by partnering coworkers that live near the worksite and offering safe and secure bike storage.

Most San Bernardino County employees can join the Walking Club. Walkers in the Club come from most geographic areas and all job classification levels. The program is incentive based, with rewards at various mileage levels. Walkers are encouraged to walk everyday and each full break walk is considered a mile. A 1999 survey of Club members indicated that 73 percent of the participants reported a reduction in stress, 46 percent reported weight loss, and 64 percent reported increase energy levels. For more information on the Walking Club, contact the EH&P Program at 1-877-766-1828 for more information. For more information on establishing a healthy workplace, please don't hesitate to contact me directly at (909) 387-6331; [jmortimore@dph.sbcounty.gov](mailto:jmortimore@dph.sbcounty.gov), or visit the Nutrition Program website at [www.sbcounty.gov/eatwell](http://www.sbcounty.gov/eatwell).

— Julie Mortimore, RD, Public Health Nutritionist  
Department of Public Health

## WHAT'S E-HAPPENING!

New to the EH&P staff are two **HS Modified Duty/ADA Coordinators...**



**Pearl Holliday**, hired in 1995, has worked for the Information Services Division, and recently transferred to EH&P from the Department of Behavioral Health this March. Pearl holds a Masters Degree in Public Administration from California State University, San Bernardino, and is a member of the County Women's Network, Leadership Development Network, the American Society of Public Administrators, Toastmasters International, and completed the Management Leadership Academy in 1999. Pearl's hobby is being a 'Trekkie.'



**Milanen Townes** began as a student intern with the County in 1994, and has a Master's Degree in Public Administration from California State University, San Bernardino. She worked for Human Services on automation projects, and also served as support staff at both the Administration and Program Integrity Divisions. Prior to coming to EH&P, Milanen was a Staff Analyst at the Sheriff's Department's Bureau of Administration. Milanen has lived in California since 1976, and is a mom to one very precocious child, Chris.

## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



Can you say—  
**HEALTHY!**

**Melinda R.**

**Medina** sets a good example with such a healthy lifestyle. Melinda's career with the County began in 1977, where she has worked in a broad range of departments, and is currently working for the Board of Retirement.

Melinda became inspired to run three Los Angeles Marathons in 2001, '02 and '04, so she could give each of her children—Malina, Marcus and Michael—a medal for her reaching her goal to cross the finish line.

Some of Melinda's fitness activities include participating daily in the county's Walking Club, walks 30-35 minutes at least 3 to 4 times per week after work, rides her bike about one hour on Saturdays, and trains with the Loma Linda Lopers on Sundays to prepare for the 2006 marathon. Melinda also joined Weight Watchers at Work® held at the Board of Retirement, and at the time of this writing has lost 17 pounds. She says she eats lots of salads, vegetables and fruits, and has learned to pay attention when she reaches her "comfort zone" and feels full.

Melinda has been married to husband, Mike, for 25 years and resides in Redlands.

(If you would like to nominate an employee for the **Employee Spotlight**, please fax his or her name, department and telephone number to 909-387-1020)

**Well, well, well . . .**

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